

Statement on the Interagency Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes

April 24, 2007

The brave men and women who have volunteered to protect and defend our country deserve to receive the highest level of support from our grateful Nation. Today Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson and members of the Interagency Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes released a governmentwide action plan that sets out steps to improve our care for America's troops and veterans.

The task force has proposed specific recommendations to immediately begin addressing the problems and gaps in services that were identified across the veterans and military healthcare systems. These recommendations include directing the Department of Defense and the Department

of Veterans Affairs to develop a joint process for disability determination. Additionally, I have asked Secretary Nicholson to communicate directly with the members of the Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors to ensure that both groups exchange ideas and information that will efficiently advance reform efforts.

I commend the work of the task force, welcome its recommendations, and have directed Secretary Nicholson to work with all agencies involved on the recommendations and to report back to me within 45 days on how these measures are being implemented.

Message on Armenian Remembrance Day

April 24, 2007

Each year on this day, we pause to remember the victims of one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century, when as many as 1.5 million Armenians lost their lives in the final years of the Ottoman Empire, many of them victims of mass killings and forced exile. I join my fellow Americans and Armenian people around the world in commemorating this tragedy and honoring the memory of the innocent lives that were taken. The world must never forget this painful chapter of its history.

All who cherish freedom and value the sanctity of human life look back on these horrific events in sorrow and disbelief. Many of those who survived were forced from their ancestral home and spread across the globe. Yet, in the midst of this terrible struggle, the world witnessed the indomitable spirit and character of the Ar-

menian people. Many of the brave survivors came to America, where they have preserved a deep connection with their history and culture. Generations of Armenians in the United States have enriched our country and inspired us with their courage and conviction.

Today we remember the past and also look forward to a brighter future. We commend the individuals in Armenia and Turkey who are working to normalize the relationship between their two countries [countries].* A sincere and open examination of the historic events of the late-Ottoman period is an essential part of this process. The United States supports and encourages those in both countries who are working

* White House correction.